

A Study in Brothers, Byerses, and Black Eyes by The_Sarcastic_Witch

Category: Stranger Things (TV 2016)

Genre: Abusive Neil Hargrove, BAMF Joyce Byers, Billy Hargrove Needs Love, Billy Hargrove Redemption, F/M, Gen, Good Parent Joyce Byers, Implied/Referenced Child Abuse, M/M, Neil Hargrove Being an Asshole, Neil Hargrove is His Own Warning, Neil Hargrove's A+ Parenting, Other Additional Tags to Be Added, POV Alternating, POV Billy Hargrove, POV Joyce Byers, Protective Joyce Byers, Susan Hargrove's A+ Parenting, set between seasons 2 and 3

Language: English

Characters: Billy Hargrove, Joyce Byers, Maxine "Max" Mayfield, Neil Hargrove, Susan Hargrove

Relationships: Billy Hargrove & Maxine "Max" Mayfield, Joyce Byers & Billy Hargrove

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Summary:

Joyce Byers knows what abuse looks like, and she'll be damned if she sits back and lets it happen to someone else. The story of Billy Hargrove how it could have gone. Formerly titled Likewise.

Trigger Warnings:

CH 1: Mention of abuse, nothing graphic.

1. Chapter 1

Author's Note:

Hello lovely readers!

Hi! This is my first published work in the Stranger Things fandom, so I'll introduce myself. I'm The Sarcastic Witch! I have a deep hatred for Neil Hargrove, a passionate love for the stone-cold badass that is Joyce Byers, and a complete refusal to believe that Billy is dead. I also love 'Billy gets rescued from Neil "Child Abusing Dickwad" Hargrove' fics, so I decided to write one of my own! You should not expect super-regular updates as this is a secondary project, but I shall try to post at least once a month. I hope you enjoy!

Yours in Strangness (and Things),
The Sarcastic Witch

Joyce

Joyce Byers has seen many injuries over her life. She has seen the gaping, bleeding holes the Demogorgon left, the punctures that the demodogs inflicted, and all manner of cuts and scrapes from her boys and their friends. And she's seen the kind of wounds that are more sinister, more insidious. She's seen the bruises, the black eyes you can't explain, blooming on her own skin, the kind of wounds that come from a place that is supposed to heal and protect, not hurt. Those injuries form the words to a language she is all too fluent in, and she knows them when she sees them.

She hasn't had to speak the language since she saw the words form on the face of her son for the first time, but she knows she just spotted them again. She saw Billy Hargrove's black eye as he sat in his car, waiting to pick sweet little Max up. And, in a split second, she knew that he hadn't walked into a wall, he hadn't tripped and fell, and he sure as hell hadn't gotten into a fight, no matter what that bitch, Susan Hargrove, told her when Joyce asked when she was ringing her up at Melvald's. She knew as soon as she laid eyes on the woman that Susan Hargrove knew nothing of the language her and

Billy spoke and she knew from the look on her face when she asked about Billy that Susan was perfectly aware of what was going on in her house, and just didn't give a shit.

Well, it's no wonder the poor boy gets himself into so much trouble. He doesn't have anyone to care about him!

In that moment, as she watched Susan walk away secure in the knowledge that Neil Hargrove wouldn't raise a hand to her, Joyce Byers swore to herself that she would be the one to care about Billy Hargrove if it was the last thing she ever did.

Joyce Byers suddenly started to spend a lot of time driving around near Old Cherry Road at night. Eventually, she knew, Hargrove (that rat bastard) would beat up his son and then toss him out so Max wouldn't realize what had occurred. One cold November evening, her patience paid off.

Billy

Billy Hargrove dragged himself down the road, wrapping his jacket tighter around his body. Neil had been really pissed tonight, as evidenced by the state of his face. Usually, his father went for the torso and back, since they were more easily hidden, but he had lost it tonight and practically cracked Billy's face open. After it was over, Neil had kicked him out of the house into the cold with nothing but a leather jacket. *Asshole*. He hated these nights. They were few and far between, but when they happened, the pains sleeping on the ground followed him for ages. As he resigned himself to an unpleasant night, he spotted the headlights of a car coming down the road. *Who the hell is drivin' around at this time of night?* The car stopped next to him and the window rolled down. Billy started to really get nervous, but then he recognized the face of Joyce Byers, the mother of one of Maxine's little friends and relaxed. He knew she was single. Maybe she was looking for some company for the night. Before he could start on his routine, she spoke.

"Hey, Billy. Get in the car, I'm taking you to my house and taking a look at that face of yours," she said, opening the door of the car.

“No thanks, ma’am, I’m just fine. Got in a little fight, you know how it is,” Billy lied, confused. She fixed him with an unimpressed look.

“Sweetheart, it ain’t a fight when only one person is throwing punches. Don’t try to deny it, I’ve been right there with you, kiddo. I know what it looks like. Let me guess, he had a rough day at work, made up a new B.S. rule as soon as he laid eyes on you as though it was some sort of excuse, then beat you bloody?” Billy looked at her, preparing to lie or insult her until she hated him, but there was something in her eyes that pulled him up short. There was no pity, only compassion, and Billy had a feeling that this woman was going to get him to do what she wanted, one way or another. He got in the car and sat next to her. She looked at him and stuck her hand out.

“I don’t think we’ve officially met yet. Joyce Byers.” He shook it.

“Billy Hargrove.”

“Pleasure to meet you.”

“Likewise,” said Billy and, for once, meant it.

2. Not an Update

My dear readers,

Hello! I'm so sorry, but this is not an update. I just wanted to let you guys know that I WILL be working on this story as soon as possible, but it will be on hiatus for a while. I have a lot going on in my life right now and I'm working through a pretty rough depressive episode, and I really don't have enough of myself to be able to write at the moment. I'll delete this chapter as soon as I post a new one, FYI. Thank all of you so very much for the reception to this story, and I hope that I can continue it soon. Once again, this is NOT an abandonment, just a pause.

Yours in fandom, smiles, and strife,

The Sarcastic Witch

3. Chapter 3

Summary for the Chapter:

Joyce takes Billy to her home, where he meets someone new.

Notes for the Chapter:

Hello lovely readers!

I'm so very sorry for the lengthy hiatus, but I'm back with a brand new chapter! I hope y'all enjoy!

Yours in fandom,
TSW

Billy

The short drive to the Byers' was spent in companionable silence. Billy had heard that Joyce Byers was crazy, but as far as he could tell, she was saner than anyone else in Fuckville, Indiana. Soon, Ms. Byers was parking the car behind a modest house and waving Billy out.

"Okay, honey," she said cheerfully, "We're going to go inside, and I'm going to hunt down my first aid kit and fix you up, then we're going to have some dinner. Pasta ok?"

"Yes ma'am," Billy answered. She nodded and led him to the front door.

"One of my kids, Johnathan, is out, so only Will is at home," she explained, digging through her purse. She pulled out her keys victoriously, unlocked the door, and ushered Billy in. He stepped inside the house and scanned his surroundings. The back door opened up into a living room, in which a boy with a neat bowl cut and nervous eyes sat on a sofa, reading a book, which, Billy realized as he surreptitiously took a closer look, was titled *The Color of Magic*, and one of Billy's personal favorite books.

"Aha!" Ms. Byers cried from another room. "I found it!" She

came bustling into the room, brandishing a giant white box in one hand and a roll of gauze in the other. "Now, I'm certified to perform first aid, so you just sit tight there, Billy-boy, and I'll get you all patched up!" Next to Billy, the boy snorted.

"Billy-boy? Really, Ma?"

"Yeah, yeah, laugh it up," Billy groused good-naturedly.

"You know," Ms. Byers said to the boy as she deftly wrapped Billy's hand in gauze, "I was just going to call you William, no nickname, but Jon couldn't pronounce it, so he called you Will, and it just stuck." The kid smiled to himself, then caught sight of Billy again and curled up towards the arm of the couch a bit.

"You know, it's nice to meet a fellow William." Billy told the boy, who he realized must be Will.

"H-Huh?"

"I'm Billy, short for William."

"I know," the boy said anxiously, eyes darting around wildly. Something about the boy made Billy want to put him at ease.

"You have good taste," he said to Will gently.

"Huh?"

"In books. I love *The Color of Magic*. Terry Pratchett is rad." Almost instantaneously, Will's entire countenance changed. His eyes lit up and he set his book down carefully, turning to face Billy.

"Totally! Who's your favorite character? Mine is Twoflower."

"Definitely Rincewind, but Twoflower is pretty awesome." Will grinned and bounced a bit on the couch.

"Did you hear the next book is coming out soon?"

"Really?" Billy asked, plopping onto the couch.

“Yeah!”

“Awesome. The one thing I don’t like about the book is that it leaves you on a cliffhanger.”

“Yeah, its pretty annoying, but we’ll know what happened next soon! I’m so excited!” They continued to discuss the book until they heard Joyce call out from the kitchen.

“Boys, dinner is ready! Come and get it while its hot!” They hustled into the kitchen and sat at the table. Joyce scooped pasta into three bowls and put them down onto the table. She sat down and the three of them began to dig in.

“How was your day, Will?” asked Joyce.

“It was good!” Will said excitedly, “I got a B+ on my Algebra test!”

“That’s great, honey!” Joyce exclaimed, “I’m so proud of you! I know how hard you worked for that awesome grade!” Will’s eyes sparkled. Billy watched the exchange with wide eyes. If he’d brought home a B, his father would have beaten the shit out of him. Joyce’s smile hadn’t so much as flickered when Will announced his grade. In fact, her grin had widened and her eyes glowed with pride. Maybe there *was* a decent person in this shitty town.

Dinner passed quickly, Billy sitting quietly, observing how Joyce listened patiently to Will as he chattered on about school and something called ‘d and d’. Occasionally, Joyce would scoop more pasta on his plate, ignoring his protests. He gobbled down the pasta. Who knew when he’d get to eat his fill again?

All too soon, Joyce declared that it was time for bed and sent Will off to get ready. Billy turned to the door, reluctant to leave but grateful beyond measure for Joyce’s hospitality.

“Where do you think you’re going, young man?” Joyce said indignantly.

“Uh...” Joyce grabbed his arm.

“I have some old pajamas that should fit you fine. You’ll sleep in the guest bed tonight.”

“Oh, I couldn’t impose-” Joyce completely ignored him.

“Guest room is down the hall. Hustle up, it’s a school night.” Billy shrugged his shoulders. Anything was better than sleeping in the cold.

Notes for the Chapter:

Please drop a comment or leave kudos if you enjoyed! Reviews are my lifeblood!

Author's Note:

Please, please, please leave a comment or a kudos. Let me know what you liked, what you didn't, and what you want to see. Whether positive, negative, or neutral, comments make me a better writer.